

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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April 4, 2000

The Honorable Helen Thomson
Member of the Assembly
State Capitol, Room 4140
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assemblymember Thomson:

SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL (AB) 2516 (MARCH 27, 2000 VERSION)

Thank you for carrying AB 2516, which is sponsored by the Department of Health Services (Department). This bill will allow registered nurses participating in the Registered Nurse Education Program (RNEP) to practice in a broader number of health facilities and would extend the Department's authority to reimburse for telemedicine services under the Medi-Cal program until January 1, 2003.

By offering financial incentives to registered nurses to provide health care to the developmentally disabled, veterans and the mentally ill. AB 2516 will improve the quality of health care services provided to these underserved populations in state-operated health facilities, while at the same time offering more choices of health facilities in which to practice in California under the RNEP, thus helping to decrease the overall nursing shortage in the state.

There is intense interest in providing medical services through telemedicine during this time of great change in the delivery of health care. Telemedicine is not a new medical benefit, rather it is a new approach to providing existing medical services. Telemedicine has the potential to improve access to specialty consultative medical care in medically underserved rural and other areas that pose geographic or socioeconomic barriers to receiving these services, thus improving the quality of services provided by their primary physician. Patients can benefit from telemedicine through expanded access to providers, faster and more convenient treatment, reduction of lost work time and travel costs and the ability to remain with local support networks. AB 2516 allows the Department to continue to provide telemedicine services for Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

The Honorable Helen Thompson
Page 2
April 4, 2000

If you have any questions regarding the Department's position on AB 2516, please contact me at (916) 657-2843.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Charleen M. Milburn
Deputy Director
Legislative and Governmental Affairs